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"abstractions as being empty," nor is Dr. Carus in appeal or rebuke to Agnostics in any sense to be compared to a "missionary" addressing "Zulus, or, in our midst . . . a Salvationist meeting."

To one querist—in what is alluded to as a "lively discussion" at the Chicago Club—who asked if Dr. Carus did "not explain too much," it was counter-queried: "Is it possible to explain too much?" In answer to another question, Dr. Carus alleged that his conception of God "was not only compatible with the Christian conception; it is the Christian conception itself, in its matured and purified form." We ask for more explanation. "Is it possible to explain too much?"

We yield to none in admiration of the splendid and catholic spirit, the lofty ethical inspiration, the oft-times exactitude of philosophical thought and definition, that we associate with the attractive personality of Dr. Carus. His persistent misconceptions of Agnosticism we have willingly—although regretfully—attributed to unconscious bias, in degree of rebellion against dogmatic delimitation of the knowable. Time was when he appeared as the apostle of science in denial of knowledge other than physical science can yield. And we who have—on this side of the Atlantic—through many years acclaimed his work, despite his petulant upbraiding of Agnosticism, have now the right to ask for "light, more light." Have the "Philosophy of Science," the "Science of Religion and the Religion of Science," evolved a coherent Theistic belief? If not, is it inconceivable that Theists may reasonably assume that the editor of *The Monist* has a god-knowledge he is able to announce. "Is it possible to explain too much?" AMOS WATERS in *The Literary Guide*.

IN REPLY TO MR. AMOS WATERS.

Being always anxious to have his views pass through the furnace of criticism, the editor of *The Monist* has republished from *The Literary Guide* of London, England, Mr. Amos Waters's friendly but energetic protest against his "vehemently assailing the Agnostic position." In reply we make the following comments:

I am loath to reopen the debate on Agnosticism, and repeat here only that there are many kinds of Agnosticism. On some other occasion I expressed my approval of the Agnosticism of modesty, which is a suspension of judgment so long as there are not adequate grounds to be had for forming an opinion. But the Agnosticism of modesty is a personal attitude, not a doctrine. As soon as it is changed into a doctrine it becomes the Agnosticism of arrogance. By Agnosticism of arrogance I understand the theory that the main problems of life (viz., concerning the existence or non-existence of God and of the soul, as to the immortality of the soul, and the relation of the soul to the body, as to the origin of life, the nature and authority of morals, etc., etc.) are not within the ken of human comprehension. There is no need of entering now into details, as I have discussed the subject time and again and there is no need of repeating myself.¹

¹ See *Homilies of Science*, pp. 213 ff.; *The Open Court* No. 212.; *Fundamental Problems*, pp. 154 ff.; and *Primer of Philosophy*, *passim*.

Mr. Herbert Spencer is the representative Agnostic thinker, and when I criticise Agnosticism, I mean Mr. Spencer's Agnosticism. His Agnosticism is not a mere suspense of judgment but a most emphatic declaration that the mystery of life is utterly incomprehensible, that the substance of the soul (whatever that may mean) cannot be known, that energy is inscrutable, etc., etc. He has of late reiterated his principle in censuring Professor Japp for asserting that organised life cannot have risen from inorganic nature and Mr. Spencer declares expressly that he rejects the opposite view too. He rejects both horns of the dilemma, the affirmation as well as the denial, winding up his argument with these words :

"My own belief is that neither interpretation is adequate. A recently issued revised and enlarged edition of the first volume of the *Principles of Biology* contains a chapter on 'The Dynamical Element in Life,' in which I have contended that the theory of a vital principle fails and that the physico-chemical theory also fails; the corollary being that in its ultimate nature life is incomprehensible."

This high-handed way of condemning the very attempt at solving a problem on the plea that it is insolvable is the Agnosticism which I reject. I know that Mr. Spencer is commonly regarded as the most liberal, progressive, and most scientific philosopher, but I cannot help thinking that he is not. Mr. Amos Waters must not blame me for not joining the liberals in their enthusiastic laudation of Agnosticism; for Agnosticism is to my mind illiberal, anti-scientific, and reactionary in the highest degree.

How does Mr. Spencer know that the main problem of Biology, the question as to the origin of organised life, lies beyond the ken of human knowledge? Judging from the tone of his expositions he is not informed on the present state of things and has not very closely followed the investigations of biologists. And how does Mr. Spencer prove his proposition? He does so in the old fashioned dogmatic way, by quoting scriptures. There is only this difference between him and the theologian, that the latter quotes from the Bible and Mr. Spencer refers to his own writings.

Mr. Amos Waters, I know, understands by Agnosticism the Agnosticism of modesty, a suspense of judgment as to problems as yet unsolved, and I repeat that I gladly join him on that score, but Agnosticism is commonly understood as Mr. Spencer defines it, and whatever admiration we may have for Mr. Spencer personally, for his noble intentions, his studious habits, his industrious collection of interesting materials, his versatility in writing on various subjects, we must not be blind to the truth that his philosophy is wrong in its roots and exercises as baneful an influence as does the religious Dogmatism which it attempts to replace. Its main usefulness consists in stimulating thought and in disquieting the complacent assurance of the old fogies, who imagine themselves in possession of the whole truth.

There are some minor points in Mr. Amos Waters's comments. He says : "We may not apprehend what we do not comprehend."

In my opinion the reverse is true. There are many things which cannot be

apprehended and yet are they quite comprehensible. For instance, there is nothing incomprehensible in infinitude; but we cannot apprehend infinite space. In other words, it is impossible to make anything infinite (i. e., infinite space, or eternity, i. e., infinite time) an object of immediate apperception, to perceive it by the senses; but we can understand it to perfection and there is nothing mysterious about it. That we cannot apprehend any infinitude is as much a matter of course as that in counting we can never count up to infinity, or that we cannot bodily be in several places at the same time. It is a physical impossibility, but there is nothing mysterious about it; nothing that might cause us to turn Agnostic.

Mr. Amos Waters is startled to learn that the God-conception proposed in *The Monist* is "the Christian conception itself in its matured and purified form." This is nothing to be alarmed at, for it is simply the statement of a historical fact. The Christian God-conception has undergone changes. The God of the church authorities who instituted the inquisition is different from the God of the Reformers, and the God of Calvin is no longer the God of the Presbyterians of to-day. My own God-conception has developed from the traditional Protestant God-idea and has been modified under the influence of science, passing through a period of outspoken Atheism, until it was transformed into what some sarcastic but friendly critics of mine have called the God-conception of Atheism—the doctrine of the superpersonal God, which has been set forth at length in the October number of *The Monist* and has become a stumbling block to Mr. Amos Waters.

I am fully satisfied that my article on God is sufficiently clear not to be misunderstood as a pandering to that kind of God-belief which I have unhesitatingly and without any Agnostic suspense of judgment branded as a superstition. Mr. Amos Waters must bear in mind that I have not requested any one to believe in God, but have simply investigated the question of what God must be, if we understand by God that something which moulds the world and shapes the fate of man. I have, however, come to the conclusion, and am becoming more and more convinced, that the superpersonal God, the God of science, the eternal norm of truth and righteousness, is God, indeed; he alone is God. He is what the pagans (including the pagan Christians) have been groping after for ages.

P. C.